


# Town of Minocqua



## Land Use Plan Summary

### INTRODUCTION

There are few things in life that are certain. Change is the only constant. A community can grow and prosper or do the opposite. Change will occur with or without a local plan; in the short term the changes might not seem dramatic, however, with time a community's character will be altered. One way community leaders can positively influence change now and for future generations is to establish and participate in the community planning process.

Individuals are continually making plans, whether it be financial/retirement, travel, work related or other. Planning helps to organize time and establish goals with objective and subjective meanings. By planning, we develop an understanding of where we are now and determine what must be done to achieve our goals. Planning attempts to make sense out of clutter and oftentimes grants additional choices as well. In short, it makes good sense to plan ahead, if on an individual basis or community wide stage.

A good plan will guide decision-making in such a way that growth does not occur in a haphazard manner that is unsightly, wasteful, and results in increasing public service costs and property taxes. As a guide, a plan identifies various land areas for private landowners and developers to acquire and permits sensible restoration as well as new development required by the community as a whole. Planning can save the private sector time and money and minimizes conflicts between private and public sector desires.

Planning can provide other benefits as well. Planning assists communities in directing efforts and resources towards problem resolution. Planning attracts civic-minded individuals into policy-making roles through public hearings and debate which assists in making more effective decisions. The planning process generates community consensus on the desired needs and goals of the community. Those individuals directly involved in the process tend to accept the final plan as their own. Such "ownership" is what sustains the support necessary to carry a plan through the implementation phase as well as the future up-dating processes.

Local planning can have an effect of causing a community to become regionally orientated. The more a community becomes involved in the process, the more likely it will realize there is a spillover of local problems into the regional setting. Those who participate should quickly learn that regional difficulties impact the local community as well. Many problems become larger and more complex than originally anticipated, and often these problems are shared with a neighboring community and county. It will become apparent that the solution to many difficulties requires cooperative efforts among all adjacent communities.

Planning is the key to shaping a community's future for the better. Change happens, and it is in the best interests of the community to take a proactive role in ensuring that future residents will enjoy the same, if not a better quality of life than that of the current and prior generations.

### THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Town of Minocqua's planning process began in the Spring of 2001 when the Town Board and the Town Land Use Task Force requested the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) to prepare and submit a lake planning grant to the DNR to prepare a land use plan for the town. This plan focuses on land use, with some discussion of water quality.

Since the start of the process the Task Force has been meeting at least monthly at the Town Municipal Center to discuss issues, review information and maps, as well as to formulate the plan. Some members of the public attended meetings, but the major public input came from residents and land owners from a survey that was completed in the summer of 2001.

An important part of any planning process is public involvement. Public involvement provides the citizens of the town an opportunity to express their views; ideas and opinions on issues that they would like addressed on the future development of their town.

The Community Survey was sent out in late June to all property owners and residents in the town. In total 4995 surveys were distributed, with 1,603 returned for a response rate of 32 percent. The responses were tabulated, presented and summarized in a report entitled *Town of Minocqua Community Survey Findings*. Most of the comments from the surveys identified the need to preserve the "northwoods" character of the area. The results of the survey were presented at an August 2001 informational meeting. A survey summary is included in Attachment A.

The information obtained from the survey has been a guide for the development of the land use plan. The plan will in turn be used to guide the decisions of local officials.

In addition to the regular monthly public meetings and the survey, an open house meeting was held for the public to review the draft plan. This would be an additional opportunity for the public to be involved in the process. This meeting was held at the Town Municipal Center on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

The plan was revised to incorporate the comments from the Open House meeting and was forwarded to the Planning Commission. A public hearing was held and the plan was recommended to the Town Board. The land use plan was adopted on DATE.

This Plan is intended to be a guide for local officials and town residents. By utilizing the planning principles and practices outlined within the preceding parts of this report, both public and private interests can gain a clearer picture of the impacts resulting from future growth and development in the Town of Minocqua. Foremost, the plan's purpose is to provide a framework for planning and zoning decisions in the future.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY

During the week of June 10<sup>th</sup>, surveys were mailed to all 4,939 property owners in the Town. Six additional surveys were provided to citizens for a total survey distribution of 4,945. Notices were placed in the local newspaper to inform resident non-property owners and remind property owners to return them by June 30, 2001. That deadline was extended to allow additional time for people to respond. Surveys were collected up to August 1<sup>st</sup>. A total of 1,603 surveys were received, for a response rate of 32 percent.

#### Survey Results:

The following results reflect the responses for each survey question.

#### Do you own or rent property in the Town of Minocqua?

Ninety-one percent of the respondents reported that they were property owners, while nine percent were renters.

#### What type of property do you own in the Town of Minocqua?

Thirty-eight percent of respondents were year round residents, 36 percent were seasonal and 18 percent owned undeveloped land. Only 8 percent owned commercial property.

#### How long have you owned your property?

Most respondents were long time owners. Depending on the type of property, the average length of ownership was between 13 and 15 years.

#### Do you own any water-front (lake, stream, river or pond) property?

Seventy percent of respondents own water-front property. Of the 626 that responded to the number of lots owned, the average was 1.5 lots. Of the 850 that responded to the question "Are you considering selling any of your vacant lots?" less than 10 percent were considering selling. Of those considering selling, only sixty-seven were looking to sell in the next five years.

We can assume that most only own one lot and they did not answer the follow up questions since they did not apply. Although, many own multiple water-front lots, it appears that they are used as part of a residence and are not for development, at least for now.

#### Do you own any off-water property?

Forty-three percent answered yes to owning off-water property. Only 262 answered how many lots/parcels they own. The average was 3.3 lots/parcels. Of the 172 that responded to the number of lots/parcels vacant, the answer was 4.2 lots/parcels.

Six hundred and thirty-three responded to the question if they had any vacant lots? Only 17 percent responded that they had any vacant parcels and almost all of those would consider selling, most in the next five years. Forty-four respondents indicated they owned lots/parcels that were unsuitable for building.

#### Do you own any large tracts of land in the Town of Minocqua?

Only 12 percent responded yes to this question. The average amount of land owned by the respondents was 71 acres and it was split into 1.7 parcels. Only 8 percent were interested in subdividing any of the land they owned.

#### Do you live in a subdivision?

Seventy-three percent of the respondents indicated that they did not live in a subdivision. Only 19 percent said that they reside in a subdivision. The other 8 percent did not know.

#### Which of the following best describes where you live?

The majority of the respondents (45%) indicated that they live on a 1 to 5 acre parcel. The next largest response was those that had parcels less than one acre (36%). Larger parcels of five or more acres accounted for nine percent, and the other nine percent included "resort" type or "condo" developments.

#### Which one best describes where you live?

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents live on water-front property. The remaining 32 percent obviously reside off water.

#### Select what you think are the top three issues facing the Town.

The most important issue is that of Preservation of the rural environment: (i.e. green space, wetlands & forestry) followed closely by Water quality of both surface (lakes, rivers) and ground water. The Location of commercial/business growth was a distant third.

Location of residential growth and Zoning enforcement were a distant fourth and fifth place respectively. See attachment B, question 12 for a full listing of "other" responses. The most numerous mentioned were high taxes, congestion of people and cars, and the loss of character of the community.

#### As Minocqua continues to grow, what kinds of housing development would you like to see encouraged.

The clear preference for additional housing is for more single family homes. Elderly housing was a distant second choice followed by seasonal/recreational houses. Subdivisions and condominiums rounded out the top five types.

#### How should the Town provide for Industrial and Manufacturing Needs?

Sixty percent of respondents would like to see an area created for the Industrial/Manufacturing growth needs of the town. Meanwhile, twenty-seven percent like the way Industrial/Manufacturing development is currently growing, and therefore do not see any need for change.

#### Which statement do you support about Retail/Business development in the Town?

Fifty-two percent would like to see Retail/Business development limited to areas serviced by state and county highways and concentrated in certain areas. Twenty-eight percent like the way Retail/Business development is currently growing, and therefore do not feel there is any need for change. Thirteen percent would like to see Retail/Business development limited to areas serviced by state and county highways only.

#### A series of questions was asked to determine the level of priority for some different issues.

*Preservation of environmentally sensitive land and natural resources, such as wetlands, flood plains, steep hillsides, forested areas, etc.*

Seventy-one percent felt that this was a high priority, 24 percent seen this as a medium priority and 5 percent ranked it as a low priority.

*Preservation of green space, forestry and open areas:*

Sixty-nine percent felt that this was a high priority, 26 percent seen this as a medium priority and 5 percent ranked it as a low priority.

*Discouraging scattered residential subdivisions by locating new development near other developed areas of the town:*

Forty-three percent felt that this was a high priority, 39 percent seen this as a medium priority and 16 percent ranked it as a low priority.

*Protection and enhancement of existing/future parks and open space:*

Sixty-two percent felt that this was a high priority, 31 percent seen this as a medium priority and 7 percent ranked it as a low priority.

#### What Uses should be allowed in the Forestry District?

Forty-one percent of respondents felt that property owners should not be allowed to live in forestry zoned areas. Another twenty-nine percent felt that property owners should only be allowed to live in forestry zoned areas part-time. Only twenty-three percent felt property owners should be allowed to live in forestry zones year-round.

#### Identified Issues & Closing Thoughts:

The following are summarized comments from the open-ended questions included in the survey. These responses indicate various issues and concerns of the residents and property owners of the Town.

#### What do you consider to be the most critical land-use problem facing Minocqua and why?

Several things were listed, but most comments related to the general problems associated with rapid growth. These include comments like..."unattractive development along US51, timber lands being sold for other uses (zoning changes), developers turning the area into another Wisconsin Dells, over building on lake shores, high priced lake developments, billboards along the highway, condo battles on the lakefronts, greed —woods being cut down and paved over, realtors in the area must be controlled, and too much development".

#### What do you like the most?

The three most popular responses were (1) like the peace and quiet of the area, followed by (2) nature (lakes & forest), and (3) small town atmosphere.

#### What do you like the least?

The three major dislikes were (1) traffic congestion, (2) cost of living in area, mainly taxes, and (3) zoning regulations.

#### One survey response sums things up pretty well. Most would agree with this...

"We have a special place up here—lets not mess it up"

### COMMUNITY GOALS

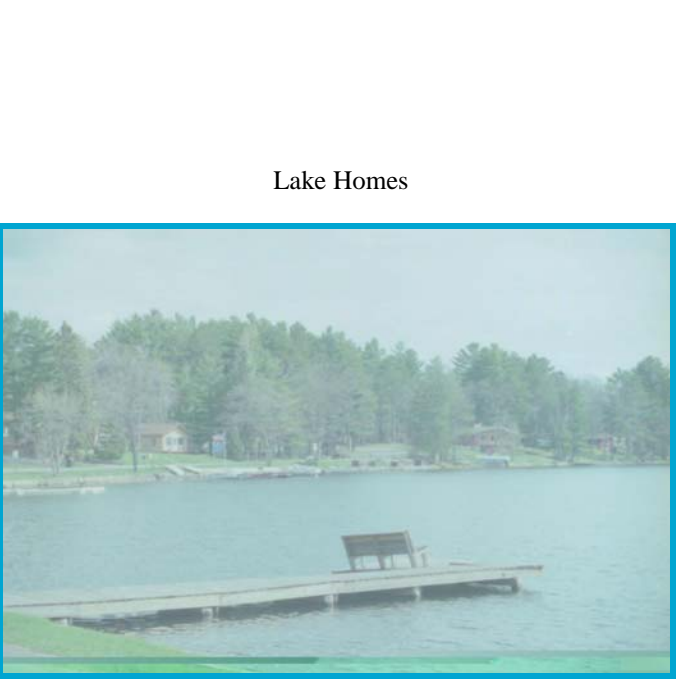
#### HOUSING

##### Goals:

- Provide a diversity of housing opportunities available to all ages and income levels throughout the community.
- Encourage affordable housing for both families and senior citizens.
- Allow apartments, condominiums, and other forms of higher density residential development in appropriate locations.
- Encourage housing specifically for the elderly, particularly congregate housing and other types of housing associated with health care.
- Maintain the quality and condition of existing housing by adopting and enforcing property maintenance codes.
- Encourage affordable accommodations for seasonal employees.
- Encourage neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.



Morgan Oaks



Lake Homes

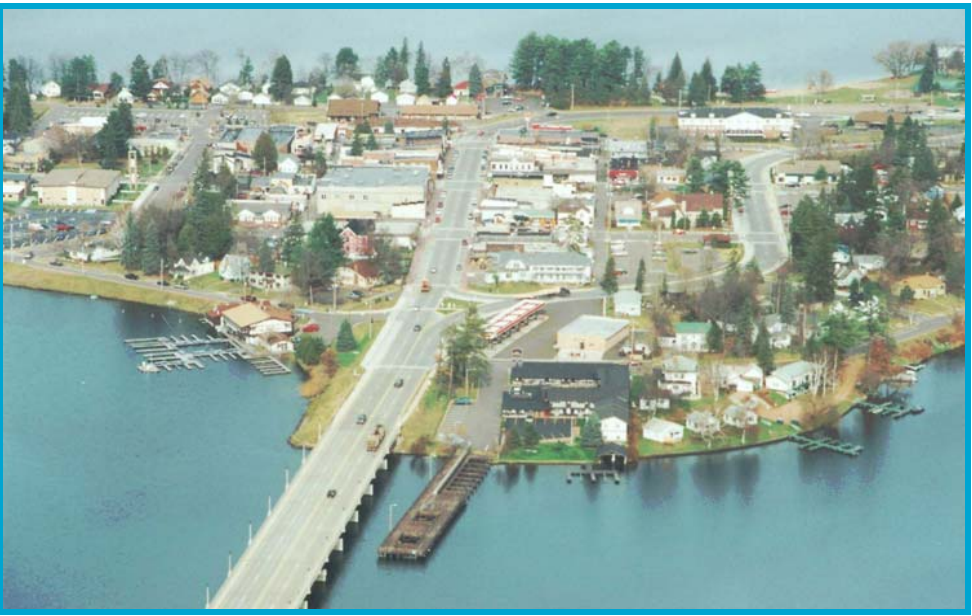
#### TRANSPORTATION

##### Goals:

- Limit new development to existing paved roads that can handle the additional use.
- Continue to utilize PASER software to inventory and rate the local roads.
- Encourage an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience and safety that meets the needs of all citizens.



Town of Minocqua 1903



Town of Minocqua 1995

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

##### Goals:

- Protect natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.
- Protect the appearance of the USH 51 and STH 70 West corridors by creating appearance guidelines which limit the number and size of signs, establish setbacks and buffer vegetation strips, and guide the types of land uses occurring in these highway corridors.
- Protect the water quality in the lakes and other water bodies through zoning and land division regulations which prevent pollution from erosion and sedimentation. Such regulations should address erosion both during and after construction.
- Encourage the extension of public sewers where development densities and/or soil conditions are inadequate for on-site septic treatment and water quality is threatened.
- All timber cutting should be done in such a manner that a protective buffer of 50 to 60 feet is maintained along all paved public roads and water bodies.
- Protect surface and groundwater sources from contamination by dumping, accidental spillage of toxic or hazardous materials, and other forms of pollution.
- Require major development, to provide on-site stormwater detention or retention basins in order to prevent excessive runoff and contaminated stormwater from entering surface water bodies.
- Discourage forest fragmentation throughout the Town.
- Preserve cultural, historic and architectural sites.
- Ensure that all new development in the town does not negatively impact environmental resources or adjoining property values.



#### LAND USE

##### Goals:

- Provide high quality public services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
- Seek efficiencies and savings that could be achieved through joint provision of services with adjoining units of government.
- New development should be responsible for paying for the cost of any utility extensions or new services required for that development without unfairly burdening the existing taxpayers of the Town.
- Land uses should be planned so that development occurs in an orderly manner and land use conflicts are avoided.
- All residential development should be set back from the roads and buffered by either natural vegetation or evergreen plantings.
- New development should not adversely affect the property value or livability of neighboring properties.
- Future commercial development should be clustered in planned development districts rather than extended in a strip along the major highway corridors.
- Strive for a "balanced economy" providing year-round, as well as seasonal, employment.
- Encourage industry and non-retail commercial development to locate in a business park setting.
- Promote recreation-oriented activities that would draw visitors at times other than the peak summer months in order to extend the tourism season and promote year-round tourist activity.
- Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial structures.
- Encourage land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.
- Provide adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial uses.
- Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.
- Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve the rural community.



EXISTING LAND USES

The Town of Minocqua has a substantial amount of forestland. Over 80 percent of the total land area is forested leaving all the remaining land is being used for residential, commercial, industrial, agriculture, and other urban land uses.

Existing Land Use:

Knowledge of the existing land use patterns within a town is necessary to develop a desired “future” land use pattern. In general, forested lands and concentrated residential and commercial development dominate the town. Commercial uses are concentrated all along Highway 51, which runs north and south on the eastern edge of the town, while residential development is concentrated around the “Island” area of the town and on the many lakes located in the town. The rest of the town is forested. However, there has been a recent trend of forestry land being converted to residential uses. This development has generally been scattered an is difficult for the town to serve with town services.

Forestry Uses

Much of the county contains a mixture of hardwood and conifer stands. In total, the county contains about 570,000 acres in forest. Of this about 400,000 acres are commercial forests, much is owned and operated by firms for the production of lumber, such as Consolidated Papers, Four States Timber Venture, Wausau Paper Mills Company, and Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company.

In the Town of Minocqua there are 88,000 acres of forest. Once outside the Highway 51 corridor along the east side of the town, the rest of the town is almost all forest, lakes and wetlands.

Agriculture Uses

Today there is less agricultural land in Oneida County than early in the 1900's. The peak in agriculture occurred in 1935 when 16 percent of the county was farmland. Farm acreage then began to decline and in 1959 nearly 10 percent or approximately 77,000 acres remained in farmland. The last state licensed dairy farm left Oneida County in 1999. Today, there are about 40,000 acres being used as farmland. The dominant use is for two major specialty, cranberries and Christmas trees.

In the Town of Minocqua there are about 160 acres of agricultural uses. There is almost no agricultural uses left in the town. One area of cranberry bogs exists in the southwestern corner of the town. Some scattered Christmas tree production also exists.

Residential Uses

Oneida County has experienced substantial residential development in the past decade. The major concentrations of population in the county are in the Rhinelander area and the Minocqua area.

Much of the residential development in county has taken place in the town. Since 1990, Minocqua has averaged almost 88 new dwelling units annually.

The majority of residential development in the town is located along the many lakes and in the “urban” are or the “Island” area of the town, near the intersection of Highway 51 and Highways 47 and 70.

In total there are about 4,400 acres of residential uses in the town. Most of this is concentrated in the “Island” area and along the major lakes in the northern half of the town. Development is concentrated on Minocqua, Blue, Kawaguesaga, Shishebogama, Squirrel, Diamond and Booth Lakes. There are four smaller lakes with some development in the southern half of the town. These are Swamsauger, Pier, Skunk and Bear Lake.

Commercial / Industrial Uses

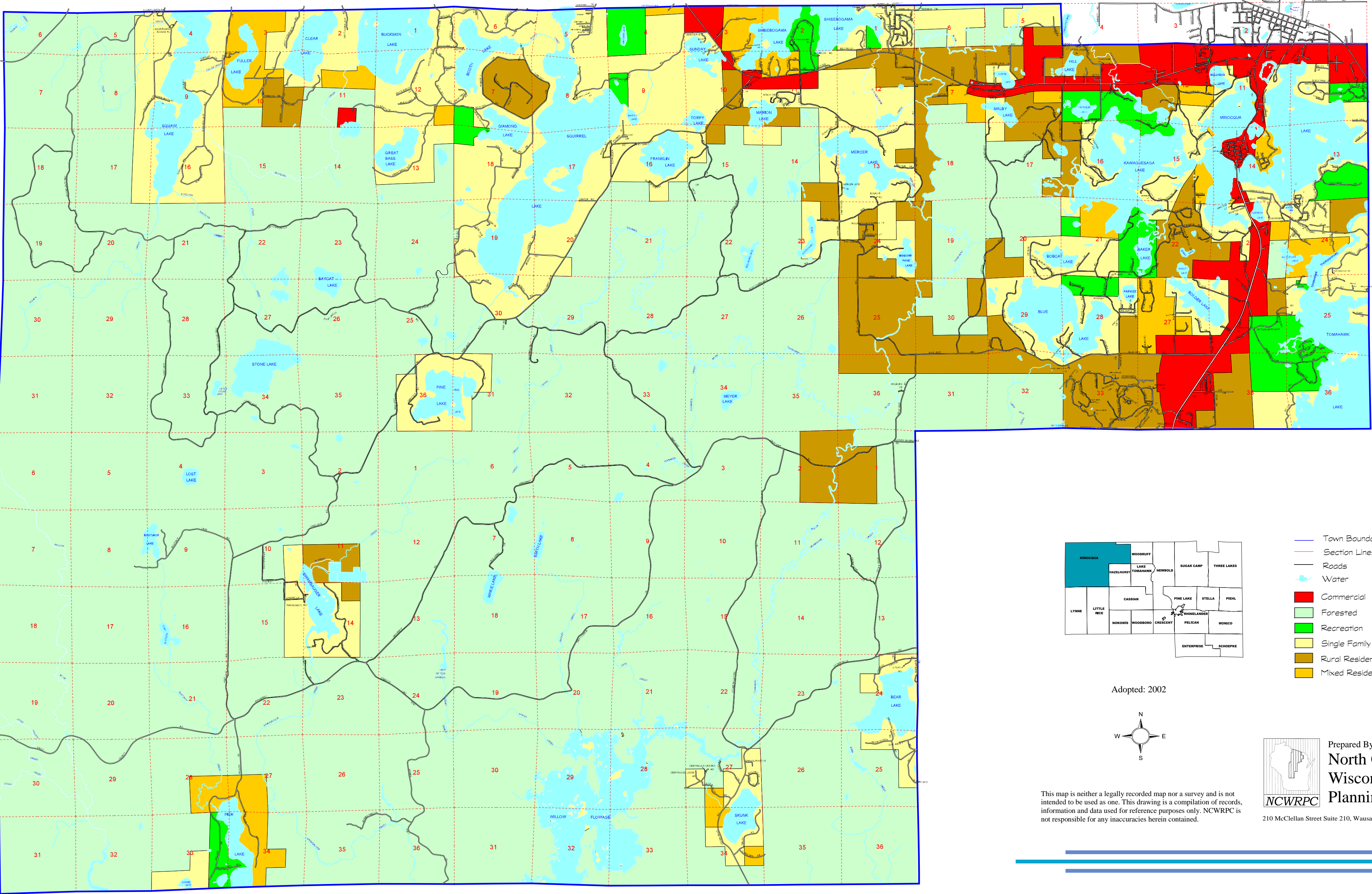
Commercial and industrial development in county and town is relatively minimal. There is only one major industrial area in the county and that is in Rhinelander. There are some scattered industrial uses throughout the county. The most common manufacturing found in the area is the lumber and wood products industry. Commercial uses are concentrated in the City of Rhinelander and the Town of Minocqua and along the county and state highways. There are scattered commercial uses throughout the county geared toward tourism.

In Minocqua the majority of the uses are commercial. There is no “industrial” park. In total there are about 700 acres of commercial land uses.

Other Uses

Other land uses in the town include surface water, roadways and their rights of way and open space. Together these amount to about 14,000 acres.

TOWN OF MINOCQUA LAND USE PLAN MAP



PROPOSED LAND USES

The land use plan map represents the long-term land use recommendations for all lands in the town. Although the map is only advisory and does not have the authority of zoning, it is intended to provide local officials with the land use desires of the community. The Land Use Plan Map is designed to group land uses that are compatible and to separate conflicting uses. An essential characteristic of any planning program is that it be ongoing and flexible. Periodic updates to the plan are needed to maintain that it is reflective of current trends. A Land Use map is not a zoning map and it does not have the authority of zoning.

Six basic land use categories were developed to determine the future land use plan. Again, these categories are not zones and are not the same as zoning districts. These categories are:

- Commercial: retail and service related activities, it does not include home based businesses
- Forested: woodlands and forests with some limited agriculture
- Recreation: residential areas where personal stables are allowed
- Single Family Residential: areas for quiet seclusion for families, with limited traffic
- Rural Residential: outlying areas of low density to preserve rural character
- Mixed Residential: other types of residential uses

Using these six categories the Land Use Committee, using their broad knowledge of the town, the series of planning resource maps, the findings of the community survey and the current trends facing the town, developed the Future Land Use map. The goal was to produce a generalized land use plan map to guide the town's growth over the next several years.

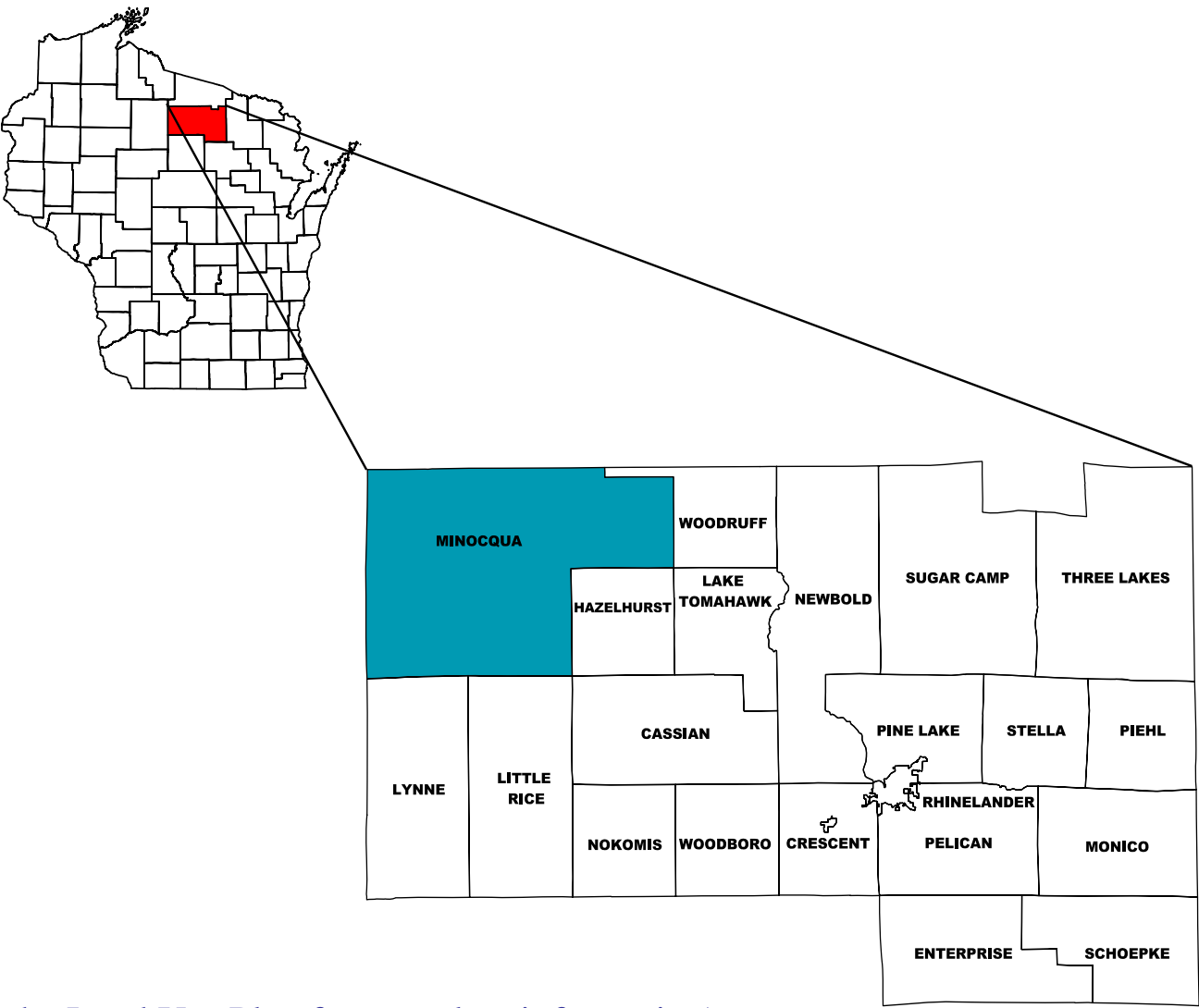
The goal of this land use plan is to balance individual private property rights with the town's need to protect natural resources and property values community-wide, and to minimize the conflicts between land uses and keep the cost of local government as low as possible. Planned development where existing infrastructure exists is the easiest and most economical to provide service to for both the town and other service providers.

The following are suggested strategies for the implementation of the Town of Minocqua Plan:

- Upon final draft approval from the Planning Committee, the Town Board should endorse and adopt the Plan as a guide for the physical development of the town for the next several years, or until updated.
- The Town Board and Planning Commission should work to integrate the goals of this Plan within the town's ordinances, policies, and programs



Downtown Minocqua



LAND USE TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

- Mary McMahon, Chairperson
- Karen Geier
- John Margitan
- Ron Sill
- Ken Tyler



(See the Land Use Plan for complete information)